

NCA
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BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5480
JIM MILLER/HONG KONG

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INDONESIAN STUDENT PROTESTS

ANNCR:

AS INDONESIA MOVES TOWARD THE ELECTION OF A PRESIDENT IN MARCH THERE HAS BEEN A STRONG PROTEST BY STUDENT GROUPS OPPOSED TO PRESIDENT SUHARTO SEEKING ANOTHER FIVE YEAR TERM. JIM MILLER HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM OUR EAST ASIAN BUREAU.

VOICE:

STUDENTS IN INDONESIA HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACTIVE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE, AND WITH SOME SIGNIFICANT EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS. AFTER A COMMUNIST COUP IN INDONESIA FAILED IN NINETEEN SIXTY-FIVE, IT WAS A STUDENT MOVEMENT WITH SUPPORT FROM THE MILITARY THAT RESULTED IN THE OVERTHROW OF THE LATE PRESIDENT SUKARNO THAT MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR PRESIDENT SUHARTO TO COME TO POWER WITH HIS NEW ORDER GOVERNMENT.

BUT SOME OBSERVERS IN JAKARTA CLAIM THAT ONLY ABOUT TWENTY PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS SUPPORT THE DISSIDENT GROUPS INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT UNREST. WHEN NUMBERS OF STUDENT LEADERS WERE ARRESTED LAST WEEKEND, IT APPEARED TO TAKE THE SPARK OUT OF THE MOVEMENT, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT. AND THE GREAT MAJORITY OF STUDENTS IN INDONESIA ARE BELIEVED TO SUPPORT MISTER SUHARTO.

MILITARY OPPOSITION TO THE ACTIVIST STUDENTS IS BASED ON THE CLAIM THAT THEY ARE REACTING ILLEGALLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE ORGANIZED STREET DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE FACE OF AN OFFICIAL BAN AND HAVE INVITED OUTSIDERS TO CAMPUS MEETINGS. SOME NEWSPAPERS ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING THE STUDENT CAUSE HAVE BEEN CLOSED DOWN. BUT THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS ON THE PART OF THE MILITARY THAT THEY SOON MAY BE ALLOWED TO RESUME PUBLISHING. MEANWHILE, THERE

HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION THAT HIGH RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS BOTH ACTIVE AND RETIRED HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE STUDENTS.

THE PRINCIPAL COMPLAINTS LODGED BY THE DISSIDENTS AGAINST THE SUHARTO GOVERNMENT ARE THAT IT IS STILL TOLERATING UNETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES DESPITE IS ANTI-CORRUPTION DRIVE AND THAT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS HAVE NOT MATERIALIZED. THE NATIONAL CONGRESS THAT WILL SELECT THE PRESIDENT IN MARCH APPEARS TO BE FIRMLY BEHIND MISTER SUHARTO. AND THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP LAST MONTH ENDORSED THE SENTIMENT OF THE CONGRESS FOR MISTER SUHARTO TO BE RE-ELECTED UNOPPOSED.

THE GENERAL OPINION AT THIS TIME APPEARS TO BE THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL HAVE NO PROBLEM RETAINING HIS OFFICE. IN IMPOSING LAST WEEKEND'S MILITARY CLAMP DOWN, DEFENSE MINISTER MARADEN PANGGABEAN SAID THE ARMED FORCES RESPECT DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BUT THAT THEY COULD NOT STAND IDLE WHILE A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE, IN THE GENERAL'S WORDS, IRRESPONSIBLY LIGHT SPARKS OF FIRE WHICH COULD EVENTUALLY BURN DOWN THE NATION. HE ADDED THAT THE MILITARY REJECTS THE NOTION THAT FREEDOM IS SIMPLY FREEDOM FOR FREEDOM'S SAKE AND THAT DEMOCRACY CAN BE USED AS A SHIELD FOR SLANDER, INSULT AND DENIGRATION OF A HEAD OF STATE, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES.

SO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT THAT STARTED LAST SUMMER AND GAINED RECENT MOMENTUM HAS A DOUBTFUL FUTURE, WHILE THE MAN IT OPPOSES -- MISTER SUHARTO -- APPEARS TO BE ASSURED OF FIVE MORE YEARS AS PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA.